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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: SHARM EL-SHEIKH INITIATIVES, IRAQ VIOLENCE,
SULTAN'S CYCLONE SPEECH, POTUS ISLAMIC CENTER ADDRESS

REF: MUSCAT 666

¶1. SUMMARY: Editorials in state-owned daily "Oman" highlighted the efforts of Arab leaders to foster dialogue between Hamas and Fatah through the Sharm El-Sheikh summit, and also lamented the increasing violence in Iraq. There was limited coverage of POTUS Islamic Center address. Dailies reported Sultan Qaboos's cyclone speech.
END SUMMARY.

COVERAGE

¶2. There was limited coverage of POTUS Islamic Center address (see REFTEL). On Sunday, July 1, all dailies reported the previous evening's speech by Sultan Qaboos bin Said, in which he stressed Oman's "solidarity and cooperation" in facing Cyclone Gonu, and awarded commendations to government officials who had prominent roles in dealing with the emergency. Local coverage continues to focus on efforts to clean up cyclone-affected areas.

BLOCK QUOTES: SHARM EL-SHEIKH INITIATIVES

¶3. On June 27, state-owned Arabic daily "Oman" (circulation 38,000) published an editorial called "Promises and Commitments that Should Be Fulfilled":

"All participants [in the recent Sharm El-Sheikh summit] ... stressed that they can not allow continued Palestinian suffering, especially in the Gaza Strip. This is a message of high importance as it relates to efforts to deal with Hamas's control of Gaza, and the increasing conflicts between Hamas and Fatah. It is urgent that all Palestinian leaders, including Fatah and Hamas, pave the way for dialogue so that they can exit this dark tunnel. The Palestinians are going to need all possible support and help from their brothers to pass through this tragedy."

PALESTINIANS NEED UNITY

¶4. On June 28, an editorial in "Oman" said that "Palestinian Harmony is the Best Choice:"

"Despite the importance of the recent summits and meetings to bring together the Palestinians, including the Sharm El-Sheikh summit, the

bases of any successful harmony depend on the Palestinians themselves. They must unify and agree on one word, forgetting the unfortunate events that have occurred between them. The Israeli entity was the sole beneficiary from the fights and clashes between the Palestinian brothers...separation will have negative consequences for the Palestinian people and the direction of their cause. The Palestinian cause needs a unified effort."

IRAQ "DETERIORATING"

15. "Oman" also wrote an editorial on June 29 entitled "Iraq and the Continuing Cycle of Violence":

"The situation in Iraq has been deteriorating in the four years since the American invasion, manifested by violence, armed confrontation, and the increase of militias and death squads in cities and neighborhoods. Violence is increasing through sectarian clashes, and scores of innocent Iraqis are being killed. This dangerous situation will continue to prevail unless a national reconciliation takes place. Iraq's best interest consists in rising up from all of this and assuming serious responsibility to get out of the dilemma. Iraq has entered a quagmire and nobody can find the solution to stop the daily episodes of blood-shedding or to stop the sectarian clashes that do not serve anybody, but only lead to more division."

FONTENEAU